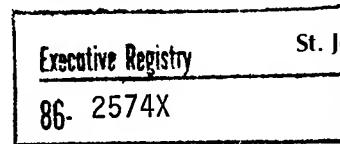


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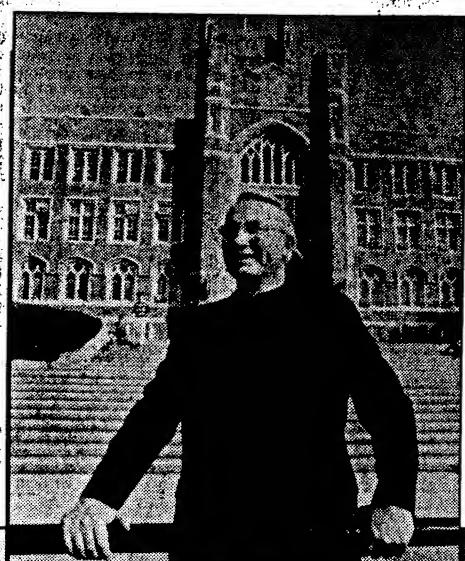
JUNE 11, 1986

Dear Mr. Casey, <sup>15 South</sup>

As a fellow Fordham Alumnus, I thought that you would enjoy reading the attached article. I don't know how closely you follow Fordham anymore, but your name does come up occasionally there.

STAT

## For the Bronx, A New Image Is a Tough Sell



**The Rev. Joseph A. O'Hare**, president of Fordham University, Fordham Plaza, above, is a \$65 million office and retail complex near the college. Below, rehabilitated apartments on Sedgwick Avenue.



THE NEW YORK TIMES / ALAN ZALE; G. STEVE JORDAN

By GEORGE JAMES

Like other national institutions of higher learning to compete for top students, Fordham University has to sell itself. Unlike most other schools, it also has to sell the Bronx.

"Is it a hard sell?" said Fordham's president, the Rev. Joseph A. O'Hare, who grew up in the borough's Tremont section. "There's no question about it that in the perception of people outside and inside New York City, the Bronx is a dangerous place."

"Recruiters say this is a problem they have to address," he said. "The best antidote is the people who come to school" — from 30 states — "and live here."

Most return home praising the attractive, 85-acre Rose Hill campus, which has been a location for 12 television commercials, 6 magazine layouts, and a still untitled Sidney Lumet film in the last 18 months. They also describe surrounding attractions — the Bronx Zoo, the Botanical Garden, and Belmont, the tight-knit Italian neighborhood to the south with its reputation as one of the safest communities in America.

"When their parents visit," Father O'Hare said, "they take them there to visit their favorite restaurants and

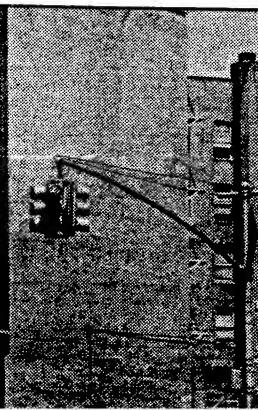
Fordham is just one of a number of institutions, including government agencies and private organizations, as well as hundreds of community groups, that have confronted the difficulties of selling the revitalization of a borough that became synonymous in the mid-1960's and early 1970's with middle-class flight and urban decay.

In recent years, each new improvement in areas such as commercial development has been seized by business and political leaders as a selling point for a Bronx renewal, creating an atmosphere of dogged optimism in which impressions take on the weight of facts.

"The Bronx is beginning to have a renaissance, which, although not dramatic, is real," Father O'Hare said.

Borough officials say there is statistical evidence for a turnaround, although some people say that the renewal is not having a great benefit for the poor and minorities.

Jose E. Serrano, a South Bronx Assemblyman who bucked the Bronx Democratic organization in an unsuccessful primary fight for the borough presidency last year — losing by a 1 percent margin — said that the political establishment had failed to bring



# For Bronx, New Image a Tough Sell

Continued From Page B1

the majority of blacks and Hispanic people into renewal efforts.

"The Bronx might have bounced back a bit, but it hasn't bounced back for everyone," Mr. Serrano said. "And it's not bouncing back with vision, with concern for the poor, or the involvement of the poor."

## Where You From?

The negative image of the Bronx dies hard, as 28-year old Tony Longobardo Jr., whose family owns an East Bronx restaurant, discovered on his honeymoon last March in Los Angeles.

"I'd get to talking to people and they'd ask, 'Where you from?' I'd say, 'I have a restaurant business in the Bronx.' They'd say, 'The Bronx!,' like everything is Fort Apache."

Carol Pasco got similar reactions when she decided to start a public relations company in the Morris Park section in 1980.

"Eventually you feel like you have to apologize for yourself," said the 33-year old Bronx native, adding that she could never have afforded the higher rents in Manhattan. "If it weren't for the Bronx, my business wouldn't have existed."

Yet, although she describes her company as the only full-time public relations agency in the Bronx, she said she could not survive solely on borough business and has also taken accounts in Brooklyn and Queens.

## Making a Commitment

The Italian restaurant at 1001 Castle Hill Avenue, Joe & Joe, which has belonged to the Longobardo family for nearly 50 years, "had tough times here in 1977-78," said Tony Longobardo Jr.. His father, Tony Sr., considered closing the restaurant, which is situated in a hotel building constructed in 1854. "We were at a low. Businesses were closing down."

But when Tony Longobardo Sr.'s children made a commitment to the family restaurant business, he spent \$100,000 on renovations. These include the installation of a new bar, a \$20,000 computer system that helps the business place orders and keep inventory, and a dining-gallery where 50 pictures of Bronx scenes dating to the last century reflect a reverence for roots.

On a recent afternoon, Joe & Joe was packed with Lion's Club members, employees from the prospering Bathgate and Zarega Industrial Parks. mourners from a funeral, and a firefighter's family, ranging in age from 7 to 70, celebrating his promotion to lieutenant.

"We're showing our customers good faith," said Tony Longobardo Jr. "Every time we add something, people get excited. It says we're here. We're staying. Years ago, whenever you did renovation like this, people said you're crazy."

One business that left the borough several years ago was the American Bank Note Company, a printer of foreign currency, moving from a 75-year-old building in the Hunts Point section to a more secure, modern building in Rockland County. Company officials said the business because of financial incentives, including a discount on electric bills.

In early 1985, however, a development company called the Bronx Apparel Center, Inc. bought the building for \$5.3 million, renovated it for \$3 million, and last December opened it to seven small garment center firms that moved to escape the higher Manhattan rents.

Max Blauner, a managing partner of Bronx Apparel, was attracted by the building's 425,000 square feet, its proximity to Manhattan and financial incentives, said his son, Sam Blauner.

"I grew up in the Bronx and my father lived in the Bronx 20 years, so we knew the Bronx," he said. "Sometimes bad reputation is truth and sometimes it's not, and in the case of the Bronx it was. But it's better than we perceived it to be. And we decided to go ahead."

Fifteen more firms are expected to move to the center by year's end. Officials expect 750 of the 1,000 estimated new jobs to go to Bronx residents.

## Hope for the Future

The investment climate is improving, according to Michael Schmeltzer, whose Tryax Realty Inc. a real-estate brokerage and development company in the Allerton section has built 350 units of housing in the last two years.

"To make good, long-term real-estate investments, there must be hope for the future," he said. "I think most people perceive the Bronx as having turned the corner."

With neighborhood backing, he recently completed rehabilitation of 124 units on Sedgwick Avenue near Kingsbridge Road in the North Bronx without displacing working-class tenants.

"Homes in the Bronx have been appreciating in value dramatically over the last two years," he said, "as much as 30 to 40 percent."

One symbol of Bronx renewal is Fordham Plaza, a \$65 million, 13-story, office and retail complex on Fordham Road, near Fordham University. Scheduled to open in August,

it is the first Bronx office building to rise in 30 years.

Retail space on the first floor is 60 percent leased at \$40 a square foot, said Edith Olivencia, leasing agent for Fordham Renaissance Associates. City and State government agencies are leasing space, and eight upper floors are to be rented to private sector tenants at \$25 a square foot.

A marriage of borough government, business, and community, has turned the Bronx around, said Stanley Simon, the Borough President. "Selling became easier once investors actually came here and overcame the fear, which in the 1960's and 1970's may have been deserved. Those were bad times here."

However, Assemblyman Serrano estimated that unemployment for minorities was still very high and that some new industries had failed to generate jobs. He added that there are still great areas of blight in the Bronx.

## Impact of Scandal

The indictment of Bronx Democratic leader Stanley M. Friedman on racketeering charges in connection with the Parking Violations Bureau corruption scandal has hurt investor confidence, Mr. Serrano said. Mr. Simon and others agree that the scandal has cast a bad light on Bronx politics and redevelopment efforts but argue there will be no lasting effects.

There are statistics that help fuel optimism. Two hundred private businesses moved to the Bronx from 1979 and 1984, plus another 29 last year, according to the city's Public Development Corporation, which says it does not keep records on how many have left. And, after losing 3,800 jobs from 1977 to 1982, the Bronx gained 10,000 jobs from 1982 to 1985, according to the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics — more than any other borough in that period.

Two months ago the Public Development Corporation produced a four-color, \$60,000 booklet extolling the Bronx as a place for investment. Similar booklets were created for Brooklyn and Queens.

"We wanted the book to really show the real beauty of the Bronx," said Frank Marino, a Public Development Corporation spokesman. "We felt we had to stress that more than in the other boroughs, because the Bronx suffered for so many years from that negative image."



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